

Secretary's Report of Conference of Deans and Advisers of Men.

In response to an invitation extended by the University of Wisconsin through S. H. Goodnight, Dean of Men, a meeting of the representatives of several universities was held at Madison on January 24 and 25, 1919. It was the first Conference of Deans of Men and officers similarly engaged in the administration of student interests and activities in universities and colleges. The purpose of the gathering was to facilitate a free and informal exchange of views and comparison of the methods of regulating student life and organizations obtained in the several institutions.

The personnel of the Conference was as follows:

Dean S. H. Goodnight, University of Wisconsin

Dean E. E. Nicholson, " " Minnesota

Dean Robert Rienow, State University of Iowa

Professor Leslie I. Reed, Iowa State Teachers College

Professor M. W. Smallwood, Syracuse University

Professor L. A. Strauss, University of Michigan

Dean Thomas Arkle Clark, of the University of Ill., was to the regret of those present, prevented from attending by illness in his family.

After paying their respects to President Birge of the University of Wisconsin, in a brief call at his office, the members of the Conference assembled in the Law Building, where all sessions were held. The sessions were virtually continuous for the two appointed days, with brief intermissions for luncheon. On the evening of Jan. 24 the members of the Conference were tendered a smoker by the Faculty of the University at the Kappa Sigma Fraternity.

At the opening of the Conference Professor Strauss was requested to serve as secretary. Dean Goodnight was later chosen as chairman when in the midst of a heated argument, it was discovered that this formality had been overlooked and also that the bottom of the box of cigars generously provided by the host had begun to heave into sight. The honor of the chairmanship was in recognition of Dean G's efficient services as chauffeur to the Conference. His admirable record in this capacity is cited as an example for emulation by future hosts.

Average number of passengers-----	5
Miles covered-----	932
Gasoline Consumed -----	3 Qts.
Collisions-----	none
Persons run down-----	none
Curbstoned damaged-----	1
Blowouts-----	none
Stalled on car tracks-----	4
Admonished by police for illegal parking-----	1
Bawled out by police for reckless driving, cutting corners, etc.-----	3

Total

34n

1-way

The Conference was entirely informal in nature. At the outset Dean Goodnight proposed as a topic for discussion the question "What should be the attitude of the college authorities toward large affairs (such as Junior "Prom", Student Operas, etc.) now that the war is over? Should resumption of pre-war conditions be encouraged or should conservatism and economy be insisted upon? This matter was not considered immediately. In fact the greater part of the first day's sessions was devoted to the discussion of matters pertaining to fraternity initiations (when they should occur, etc.) and finances. There was no attempt or discussion to confine the discussion to a definite theme at a particular time. The delegates felt that the exchange of opinions and experiences was all the more valuable because of this freedom from restraint. It did not, however, tend to simplify the duties of the secretary, who feels compelled to crave indulgence for the vagueness and incoherence of this report.

The following topics were considered at one or various times:

1. Attitude toward major activities.
2. Fraternity initiations.
3. Fraternity finances.
4. The warmer System of Fraternity management.
5. Relations of students and landlords.
6. Classroom attendance and scholarship.
7. Credit for Military work.
8. Student Self-Government.

Regarding the first question, it seems that in the past the "Junior Prom", Hop or Ball, as it is variously designated, has in most institutions been characterized by certain evils, such as extravagance, undesirable publicity, undemocratic character, etc. These faults have been generally corrected to a fair extent in most of the institutions represented. At Syracuse, due to local conditions, they still exist in offensive form and Professor Smallwood would have liked the Conference to pass a resolution limiting the cost. On the other hand, the function at the State University of Iowa is so modestly conducted, that the delimitation proposed might suggest greater extravagance. It was agreed that the matter must be handled locally by each institution. The situation as regards this and similar functions seems to be about the same at Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

The question whether student "operas" such as those of the "Haresfoot" at Wisconsin and the "Mimes" of the Michigan Union should be allowed to travel this year received but slight attention. Dean Goodnight was disposed to discourage anything like pretentious and costly undertakings so long as post war-time economies are desirable. At Michigan the tendency is to encourage, or at least not to discourage normal student activities and to make the question of a tour contingent upon active Alumni demands.

Regarding fraternities, the question most persistently discussed was that pertaining to initiation. Considerable difference of opinion developed as to the possibility of attaining the ideal of sophomore initiation. The theoretic gain to the fraternity and the University accruing from the exclusion of first year men was generally admitted. On the other hand, the practical difficulties attending the working out of the change make the realization of the reform seem very far away. Doubtless this question will be revived for discussion at future gatherings of the Conference.

The afternoon session of the first day was largely devoted to the discussion of fraternity finances and to an explanation by Paul Warner of his System of fraternity management. Interesting revelations were made by several of the Deans present, as to the desperate financial straits in which fraternities frequently find themselves through the inexperience or incompetence of student manager. Mr. Warner's explanation of his methods of management and cooperative purchasing deeply impressed the members of the conference who were unacquainted with it. Mr. Warner kindly offered his services to any institution represented in case any of them desired to attempt the installation of his or a similar system. (It may not be amiss to state that at the University of Michigan an attempt is now being made to carry out Mr. Warner's ideas with very fair promise of success.)

The matter of the relation of students to landlords was handled very informally. Personal experiences, illustrating the problems encountered by the several Deans and their methods of solving them, were freely narrated.

The secretary was impressed with the fact that there is a considerable variance in the degree of responsibility assumed by the several institutions with regard to this matter, as well as to the general question of the student's financial responsibility. This is another matter that might well be seriously considered at future meetings.

The problem of classroom attendance and scholarship was given considerable attention. Apparently the duties of the Dean of Men have been developed further in some institutions than in others. In several schools this official is responsible for the attendance of students in all departments of the University and also exercises supervision over scholarship. In other places these matters are still in charge of the Deans of the schools and colleges. The following resolution was unanimously passed by the Conference:

"It is the sense of this Conference that all absences from classes in the various schools and colleges be regularly reported to and handled by a central bureau."

Regarding the relations of the student body to the outside world, it developed that in general the Dean of Men is the personal representative of the president of the University.

The question of credit for Military work was brought up and the following plan was reported by Professor Smallwood as likely to be adopted at Syracuse:

1. Credit to be given for all work passed (examinations)
2. Students receiving commissions should be granted 15 hours credit; that is, a full semester's work.
3. The granting of credit to soldiers should be put on a personal basis. Men who were in actual service but did not receive commissions should have their credit fixed according to their apparent development and the quality of the work done afterward in the University.

In the course of the general discussion of the question of student self-government it developed that the Universities of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan present almost identical conditions in this respect. The general tendency in these institutions is to encourage student initiative under faculty over-sight. At the

University of Iowa there seems to be a greater tendency on the part of the students to depend upon faculty rules for their guidance in many matters that are handled directly by the students in the other institutions named. Dean Rienow expressed the belief that at the University of Iowa a greater degree of initiative on the part of the student is to be desired. There was a strong feeling among those present that the greatest obstacle to ideal conditions of student self-government is lack of confidence in the self-governing bodies among the students themselves. In general the faculty seek to encourage and strengthen those self-governing bodies and deprecate any further tendencies toward paternalism.

In closing the report it seems desirable to state that the value of the work of the Conference is by no means indicated in this inadequate account of its proceedings. The secretary frankly admits that he was too deeply interested in the discussion to have in mind his clerical duties. He believes, however, that he is voicing the sentiment of all present in expressing the conviction that the exchange of experiences and opinions made possible by this meeting will have brought valuable and practical returns in its reaction upon the work of each official in his own demesne. Before adjournment the members of the Conference informally but warmly expressed their grateful appreciation of the hospitality of the University of Wisconsin and of Dean Goodnight in particular.

Respectfully submitted

(Signed) J. A. Strauss

Secretary